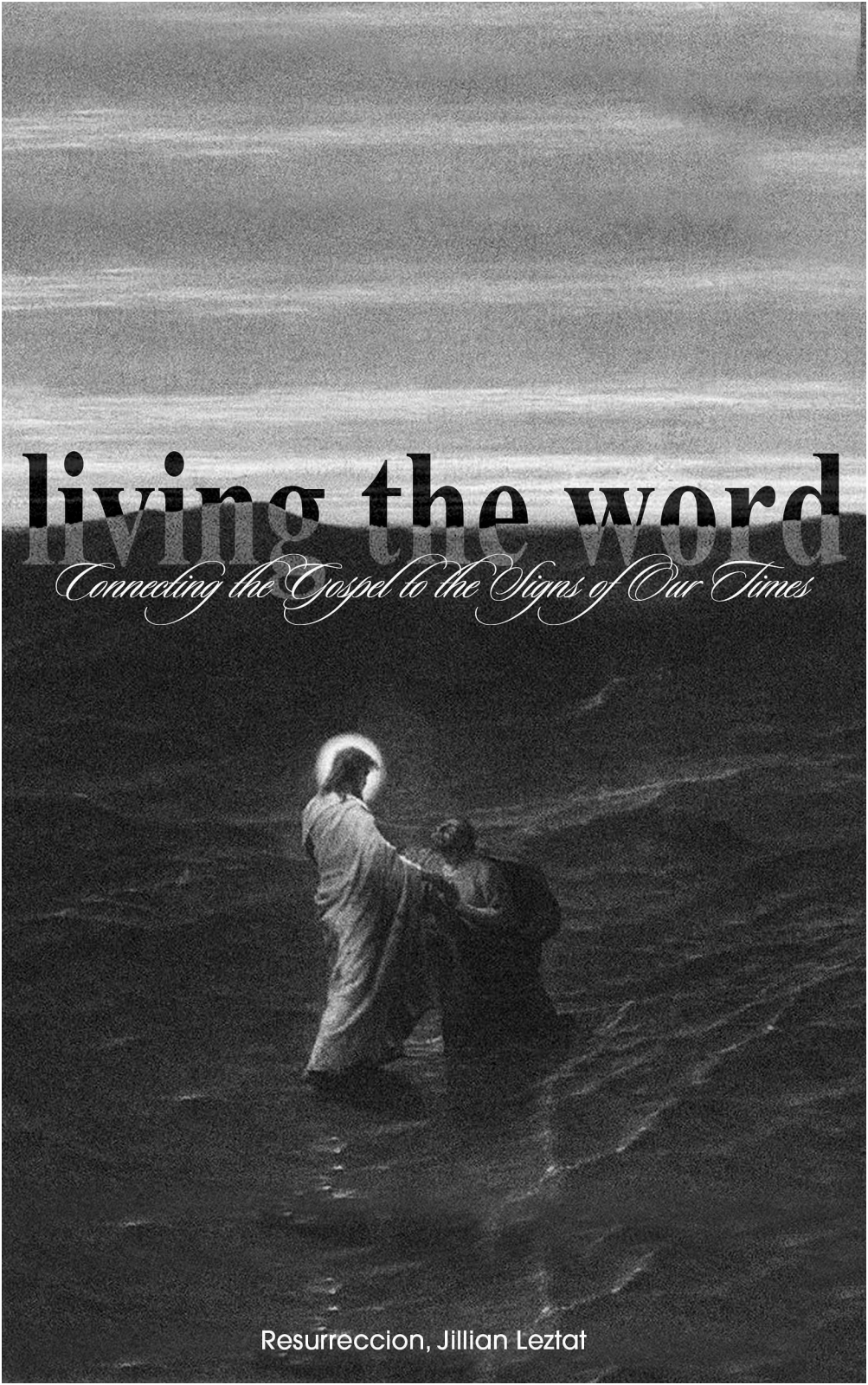
# living the word

*Connecting the Gospel to the Signs of Our Times*



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# Living the Word: Connecting the Gospel to the Signs of Our Times

*Seeing the world through the light of the Gospel. Finding God's voice in the events, struggles, and stories of our society today.*

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*To God, who continues to speak through His Word and through the events of our time, to all those who seek truth, justice, and hope in the midst of our changing world.*

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

Letter of of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans 12:2

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# Preface

The reflections gathered in this small collection were written during a time when I was learning to look at the world more carefully and thoughtfully. Through the practice of the Digital Examen, I was invited not only to read the news and observe the events around me, but also to pause and ask how the Word of God speaks within these realities.

Often, we hear the Scriptures during Mass, but it is easy to separate them from the events happening in our society. Yet the Gospel is not meant to remain only within the walls of the church. It continues to speak in the midst of the struggles, hopes, and questions that we encounter every day.

The reflections in this collection attempt to connect the message of Scripture with the signs of our times. Some reflections respond to issues of justice and accountability, while others highlight moments of faith and devotion that continue to inspire many people today. Each one begins with a real situation or story and seeks to view it through the light of the Gospel.

These writings do not claim to provide perfect answers. Rather, they are simple attempts to listen more attentively—to the news we hear, to the lives of people around us, and to the voice of God speaking through these experiences.

It is my hope that these reflections may also invite readers to pause, reflect, and recognize that the Word of God continues to guide us as we journey through the realities of our time.

# Rejoicing in Truth: Faith and the Call for Accountability: Trillion Peso March on September 21

## A Nation's Call for Accountability

*A photo showing the bronze Our Lady of EDSA standing firm against the urban skyline, a silent witness to the million-strong peaceful revolution that reclaimed Philippine democracy in 1986.*

In observance of what is happening in our country, most especially in the case of corruption. Religious groups, civic society, sectoral organizations, and political formations

united to call out the alleged corruption regarding flood control and infrastructure scandals. This nationwide rally calls demand for accountability (Delizo, 2025). This nationwide rally TRILLION PESOS MARCH MOVEMENT will be held on November 30, at EDSA People Power Monument. Organizers of this movement say that this movement's purpose is to clear up misunderstanding and promote clarity, and seek genuine accountability. (Dumalag & Villanueva, 2025).

## Using Our Voice to Proclaim the Truth

Upon hearing this news, I remember reading the Pastoral Letter "When the Waters Are Rising and the Truth is Drowning" of my Bishop in our diocese, Cardinal David. He stated what we can do. "We have a voice, and we must use it." As a communicator of Christ, we must be open, we must use what we have, and in the emergence of a new type of communication, social media, we should use this as a medium in spreading the truth.

*A photo showing Brother Hansel Mapayo, SSP, with a raised fist, illustrating the profound intersection of religious life and the pursuit of social justice—a living testament to the faith-led courage of the People Power movement.*

# Faith in Action: Seeking Justice in the House of the Lord

“Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord. “Psalm 121 - The psalm invites us to go in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the Lord, there is justice and truth. Rejoicing in a form of faith in action, in which supporting and joining the movement for good governance in promoting righteousness. Going to the house of the Lord with the courage to promote the truth symbolizes the demand for accountability that we are seeking. This also promotes integrity, hoping that through prayers, the truth and justice will prevail.

# The Light of Faith in the Devotion to Señor Sto. Niño: Sinulog Festival on January 18

## A Living Devotion: Faith in the Sinulog Festival

*A photo showing a young child's radiant smile while holding the Sto. Niño, embodying how the light of Christ breaks through the darkness to bring a sense of hope and renewal to the faithful.*

Reading and watching the news about the Sinulog Festival in Cebu, which gathers around five million participants, is truly fascinating. It shows a deep and lasting devotion to the Catholic faith that began in Cebu many centuries ago and continues to live strongly in the hearts of Filipinos today. I am amazed at how this devotion has been preserved in our

country, where every devotee carries personal struggles, sacrifices, and prayers that they offer to the Señor Sto. Niño as a sign of their faith and trust in God.

## The Child Jesus Among the Poor and the Marginalized

The devotion to the Child Jesus also reminds me that Christ chose to be close to the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. In the image of Sto. Niño, we see a God who humbly came into the world and walked with humanity in its suffering and hope. For many devotees, the festival is not only a celebration but also a testimony of their personal journeys, where faith becomes a source of strength in facing the realities and challenges of life.

*A photo showing the Sto. Niño standing at the facade of the seminary, a silent invitation for those in religious formation to carry the Light of Christ into a world often overshadowed by darkness.*

## The Light of Christ in the Midst of Darkness

This devotion resonates with the readings from the Gospel of Matthew, where light breaks into the darkness. The Gospel reminds us that Christ enters our lives to bring hope,

especially in moments when we feel lost or burdened by difficulties. In the same way, the Sto. Niño continues to inspire conversion and renewal in our lives, reminding us that faith is a lifelong journey that leads us toward hope, transformation, and a deeper relationship with God.

# God's Mercy and the Call for Justice: Atong Ang's Case of Missing Sabungeros

*A photo showing families of the missing* sabungeros *holding posters of their loved ones, a poignant plea for justice that highlights the ongoing search for truth and accountability in the face of enforced disappearances.* ***Photo Credit:*** *VERA Files (https://verafiles.org/articles/marcos-and-the-quest-for-justice-for-the-missing-sabungeros)*

## Justice in Action: A Step Toward Accountability"

"*The LORD is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness." (Psalm 145:8)*

Reading the news about the Department of Justice (DOJ) indicting businessman Charlie "Atong" Ang on multiple counts of kidnapping in connection with the missing sabungero case reminds us that justice remains an important pursuit in society. For the families of those who disappeared, this development represents a step toward accountability and truth. It shows that even in complicated and powerful cases, the search for justice continues.

## God's Mercy and the Call to Protect the Oppressed

This situation reflects the message of the Psalm which reminds us that the Lord is gracious and merciful, yet also just. God's kindness is not passive; it calls people and institutions to protect those who are oppressed and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. When authorities take action to investigate and hold individuals accountable, it reflects the deeper moral responsibility to uphold justice and dignity for every human person.

## Faith, Responsibility, and the Triumph of Justice

Ultimately, God's mercy reminds us that justice must prevail and that no one stands above the truth. Regardless of power, influence, or wealth, every person must be accountable for their actions. As people of faith, we are also called to reflect God's kindness by standing with the oppressed, seeking truth, and continuing to hope that justice will prevail for the sake of the victims and their families.

# When the Heart Chooses Evil: Scripture in the Face of Violence

## A Tragic Crime and Its Impact on Society

*A photo showing the memorial service for Police Senior Master Sgt. Diane Marie Mollenido, a victim of a tragic double murder alongside her young son, where a priest offers prayers for justice and eternal rests.* ***Photo Credit:*** *Inquirer.net (https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2183471/couple-helper-charged-with-murder-of-cop-son)*

As I browse through my feed in facebook and watch local television news and reports, the case of Police Senior Master Sgt. Diane Marie Mollenido and her eight-year-old son, John

Ysmael, who was brutally murdered. The investigators of the crime revealed that the suspects is a former policeman and his wife, allegedly killed the mother and child in their home before bringing their own children along to dispose of the bodies. This really shocked the country in an instant. And I chose readings that counterpart the incident that came from 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

## Choosing Good or Evil: The Call of Divine Law

In the first reading from Sirach 15:15-20 that "before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him.". Wherein in the case of Police Senior Master Sgt. Diane Marie Mollenido, the suspects chose to commit "bad" things that represent evil rather than choosing love and integrity of life towards their neighbors. On the other hand, the Responsorial Psalm echoes this verse "Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!". This law is not just an ordinary or worldly law but a divine law to follow, it is the moral law that God gave to us, commanding us to value human life above personal gain.

## Following the Gospel: Walking the Path of Righteousness

Additionally, in the gospel according to Matthew, "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment." This raises the bar of morality wherein Jesus himself stated and taught that who harbors darkness and violence will be liable for judgement, This case shows us what will happen when the heart is hardened because of material gain. The gospel approach leads us to walk the path of righteousness that can surpass any worldly things. The incident and the scripture readings remind us to commit to an integrated life and honesty at all times. Killing is not an option, and it will never be.

# Bread of “truth” over the “sand” of lies.

## Corruption and the High Cost of Deceit

*A photo showing First Sergeant Andrei Balatbat during a legislative inquiry, where his testimony as a whistleblower on the flood control project highlights the critical role of moral courage and truth-telling in seeking government accountability.* ***Photo Credit:*** *ABS-CBN News (https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/nation/2025/10/29/surprise-whistleblower-orly-guteza-in-custody-of-marines-says-ex-rep-defensor-2027)*

A “war of stories” involving a group of former Marines who came forward as whistleblowers has dominated Metro Manila’s headlines this week. They claimed that

billions of pesos meant for projects to prevent flooding were taken away as kickbacks in suitcases. Even though the Philippine Navy has since stated that a number of these men never served in the Marine Corps, the controversy highlights a harsh human truth: the desire to sacrifice millions of lives for one's own gain. The situation shows a city struggling with the weight of deceit and the high cost of corruption, regardless of whether the "ghost projects" are genuine or the whistleblowers are carrying out a political plan.

## The Temptation of Wealth: Gospel Lessons from the Desert

The Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent (Matthew 4:1–11) has a significant connection to this local drama. Jesus encounters the greatest temptation in the desert, who offers Him "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" (Matthew 4:8) in return for His purity of heart. The lure of a billion-peso kickback is the same as the temptation on that "high mountain": the desire for wealth without truth and power without service. But Jesus refuses to take the short cut, firmly believing that "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). He serves as a reminder that a human heart can never be entirely satisfied by the "bread" of stolen wealth.

## Choosing God's Word Over the Idols of Greed

This news encourages us to consider our own "desert" experiences in the city as the Lenten season gets started. The Gospel holds us to a higher standard in a society where diskarte (shrewdness) can easily turn into panloloko (deception). Even when the shortcut seems easy, it encourages us to worship God alone and reject the idols of greed. A society based on the "sand" of lies and ghost projects is bound to fall collapse, but one based on the rock of God's word is able to endure any storm, regardless of whether the charges are validated or rejected.